

# DRIVER'S SEAT

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## Sergeant's Business: Training Soldiers, Training Records, Training Meetings

Should go without saying, shouldn't it? That we NCOs are responsible for training individual soldier and crew skills; that we NCOs must record our soldiers' training status; that we NCOs must assess our soldiers' training status, and help plan/execute the training that corrects any weaknesses.

Yet, at the most recent Senior Leader's Training Conference (SLTC), our most senior commissioned and noncommissioned leaders agreed that their units are not training well, and that too many of their units are not well trained in "the basics" (individual and collective skills). Many reasons for this situation were discussed; among them high unit OPTEMPO, short leadership and staff assignments, lack of resources (time, training area, money), and unfocused training environments (can't train the important tasks because higher guidance does not identify or enforce what is important to train). Junior leaders were criticized for not understanding our Army training doctrine (*FM*s 25-100 and 25-101).

After Action Reviews from the CTCs reinforce these senior leader perceptions. Units arrive at the NTC or the CMTC without the ability to execute collective tasks to standard. Weaknesses in simple individual, leader, and crew tasks, which must be trained/learned before collective task improvement can take place (for example, precombat checks, preventive maintenance inspections, MILES bore-

sighting, actions on direct or indirect fire contact, first aid and casualty evacuation), hinder unit learning curves.

By the end of the SLTC, a number of suggestions for improvement were made by commanders and command sergeants major. "Get back to the basics" was one. "Train our junior leaders in their training management role" was another. Despite such problems as OPTEMPO and money, we NCOs can improve our unit situations by reemphasizing our role in assessing and executing individual and crew-level training.

I ask all armor and cavalry leaders to look at your own unit's training management cycle. Review *FM* 25-100 (especially Chapters 1 and 2) and *FM* 25-101 (especially Chapter 2, the "Near-Term" and "Preparation for Training" portions of Chapter 3, and Appendix "G"). Find and use *TC* 25-30, "A Leader's Guide to Company Training Meetings." (I am amazed at how few NCOs know that this circular exists!). At the individual level, our readiness can be dramatically improved in five steps, even without two-year platoon leader tours or buckets full of money from Uncle Sugar.

Know your company METL, your platoon battle tasks, and select all the individual and leader tasks which support (link to) these collective tasks. For an armor NCO, it means working with your fellow leaders to select from *ARTEP* 17-

237-10-MTP, *FM* 17-15, *STP* 17-19K23-SM, and *STP* 21-1-SMCT. It requires a lot of time and attention to detail, but we must know what our team must do.

Create your leader book, and use it! I don't mean a "cheese book" for a Morales or Audie Murphy Board, I mean a useful and constantly used training record! However you organize it, a worthwhile leader book must list company METL and platoon supporting tasks with assessments; CTT proficiency (these are basic survival skills); essential soldier task proficiency and status; and crew or section collective task proficiency. Of course, the soldier-administrative data will be in your book, but I am emphasizing the leader's book as a training record. With the aid of Appendix B, *TC* 25-30, the Standard Army Training System (SATS) software package, and a personal computer, a well-organized leader book can be created in less time than it took SFC Lady to make one with pen and typewriter (I will always be grateful to SFC Frank Partyka for loaning me his computer-generated book, and for the battalion Xerox machine being next to the staff duty office!).

Assess your soldiers' and crews' proficiency, and tell your leaders what needs to be trained next. Tank commander/scout section leaders had better be pre-

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pared for platoon training meetings, and platoon sergeants for the company training meetings. Don't make the company commander or platoon leader base training plans on guesses! First sergeants must help the company commanders conduct useful training meetings by making sure meetings take place on schedule, and that everyone required to attend is there. First sergeants are also the "reality check" to make sure that training planned is completely planned, and that the training is doable with time and resources available.

Plan every training event as a multi-echelon training event. *FM 25-100* states "To use available time and resources most effectively, commanders must simultaneously train individuals, leaders, and units at each level in the organization during training events." At company level, make sure that the training plan includes platoon, crew, and individual tasks to be trained and assessed. Select a limited number of tasks to be formally assessed during each event, prepare and rehearse to conduct and assess each of these tasks, and review these preparations carefully in your pre-execution checks. Only a few individual tasks should be assessed during each collective task (try to train and check everything, and you will train and check nothing), but each must be assessed against the formal stan-

dard (often written in bullets on three-by-five cards in the tank commander's pocket).

Train to standard and AAR to standard. Be rigorous in executing the tasks, and in assessing how effectively you executed the tasks. Each leader should conduct his own informal AAR of his soldier's individual or crew tasks, and also bring those tasks into the formal collective AAR. Individual and leader task weaknesses are often at the bottom of collective task weaknesses. If the collective task did not go well, do it again. If the individual tasks were not executed to standard, retrain the soldiers and or leaders, and practice them again.

None of these steps is too hard, but none of them is "too easy." All of us are painfully aware of the distractors which work against effective training (certainly our senior leaders are; they are even aware that they themselves are sometimes the training distractors!). Let's stay in our lane, and fix what is within our reach. We can't fix the budget, or DA assignment policies. We can know what must be trained, track what must be trained, plan what must be trained. We can prepare to train, train to standard, and assess what must be retrained.

"SERGEANT, TAKE THE LEAD"